

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7366

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL DURBAN POUCH

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 0601

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS AFL-CIO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, SHUM, SF

SUBJECT: METAL INDUSTRY NEGOTIATIONS AND JOB DISCRIMINATION

REF: A) JOHANNESBURG 482

B) 77 JOHANNESBURG 3321

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: NEGOTIATIONS WHICH EIGHT WHITE AND COLORED UNIONS GROUPED IN THE CONFEDERATION OF METAL AND BUILDING UNIONS (CMBU) AND TWO UNIONS FROM THE ALL-WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (IRON AND STEEL AND ENGINE DRIVERS, FIREMEN'S AND OPERATORS ASSOCIATIONS) ARE TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK WITH THE STEEL AND ENGINEERING INDUSTRIES FEDERATION (SEIFSA) COULD RESULT IN THE REMOVAL OF JOB DISCRIMINATION IN ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S KEY INDUSTRIAL SECTORS (77 JOHANNESBURG 3321).
END SUMMARY.

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2. THE EMPLOYER'S GROUP, SEIFSA HAS GIVEN NOTICE OF ITS INTENTION TO TRY TO WRITE THE URBAN FOUNDATION/SACCOLA CODE OF EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE INTO THE NEW INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENT. THE UNIONS, WHICH REPRESENT 100,000 WHITE, COLORED AND INDIAN WORKERS IN AN INDUSTRY OF 500,000, THE REST OF WHOM ARE BLACK, HAVE RESPONDED BY DEMANDING INCREASES OF UP TO 42 PERCENT IN MINIMUM WAGES AND UP TO 23.8 PERCENT ACROSS-THE-BOARD. SPEAKING ON

BEHALF OF THE CMBU, BEN NICHOLSON OF THE SA ELECTRICAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION SAID THE INCREASED MINIMUM WAGES WOULD NOT AFFECT MOST WHITE AND COLORED AND INDIAN WORKERS IN THE METAL INDUSTRY SINCE ACTUAL WAGES ARE ALREADY HIGHER THAN THOSE DEMANDED. " THE INCREASED MINIMUM WOULD MERELY PREVENT EMPLOYERS FROM UNDERCUTTING (REGISTERED) TRADE UNION MEMBERS AND EXPLOITING BLACK LABOR".

3. IF NICHOLSON, WHO FAVORS " A CONTROLLED MOVEMENT OF BLACKS UP THE LADDER", HAS THE FINAL SAY, THE UNIONS MAY ALSO CHALLENGE SEIFSA ON ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR BLACKS. HE ARGUES THAT THE SCRAPPING OF JOB RESERVATION WITHOUT EXTENDING TRADE UNION RIGHTS TO ALL WORKERS WOULD GIVE EMPLOYERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET AROUND ORGANIZED LABOR. HE WILL FACE OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN, HOWEVER, FROM WESSEL BORNMAN OF THE IRON AND STEEL ASSOCIATION WHO OPPOSES BOTH THE RELAXATION OF JOB RESERVATION AND THE GRANTING OF BLACK TRADE UNION RIGHTS (JOHANNESBURG 482).

4. COMMENT: THE RESULTING TRIANGULAR STRUGGLE BETWEEN NICHOLSON, BORNMAN AND THE EMPLOYERS COULD, DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME, HAVE IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REMOVAL OF JOB DISCRIMINATION, TRADE UNIONISM AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY. WITH THE ARMS EMBARGO AND THE THREAT OF TRADE SANCTIONS, THE METAL INDUSTRY IS A STRATEGIC SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA'S EFFORT TO INSURE SELF-SUFFICIENCY. MOREOVER, JOB RESERVATION
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IS REGARDED EVEN IN CERTAIN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES AS ONE OF THE LEAST JUSTIFIABLE FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, WHICH HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE COUNTRY'S ISOLATION.
JOHNSON

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED AFL-CIO.

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